

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
COUNTY OF FAIRFAX
SUMMARY OF THE ANNUAL PUBLIC HEARING OF THE
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ADVISORY COUNCIL**

DATE: JANUARY 13, 2014

The public hearing commenced at 7:30 P.M. in the Board Auditorium of the Government Center. A remote public hearing testimony site was established in room 221A (Woodlawn) of the South County Center, with communications between sites established through a two-way audio and visual communication hookup via Fairfax County Cable Channel 16.

The following EQAC members were present:

Stella Koch (Chairman, At-Large)	Robert McLaren (At-Large)
Larry Zaragoza (Vice Chairman, Mount Vernon)	Alex Robbins (Providence)
Linda Burchfiel (At-Large)	Rich Weisman (Sully)
Hana Burkly (Student Member)	Glen White (Mason)
George Lamb (At-Large)	

In addition to several members of staff from the Department of Cable and Consumer Services, the following members of county staff were present:

Kambiz Agazi	Noel Kaplan
Tom Merce (South County)	

Stella Koch welcomed all those in attendance, provided introductory remarks, and asked EQAC and staff members to introduce themselves.

Noel Kaplan reviewed logistical considerations associated with the remote site at the South County Center. He thanked staff from the Department of Cable and Consumer Services, the Department of Information Technology and the Office of Public Affairs for making this a reality, and cited the following staff in particular:

- Ali Al Teweel
- Larry Aronson
- Joe Balon
- Patrick Balsamo
- Valerie Bey
- Patrick Battle
- Tommy Gamble
- John Graham
- Michael Liberman
- Kim Moir
- Donna Monacci

- Greg Smalfelt
- Kelsey Swiger
- George Teplansky
- Jennifer Tuttle
- Brian Worthy
- Barbara Zungali

Mr. Kaplan also thanked Tom Merce, Department of Planning and Zoning, for providing staff support at the South County site.

Mr. Kaplan noted the availability of the 2013 Annual Report on the Environment in several formats.

There were eight speakers, seven of whom provided testimony from the Government Center. Seven of the speakers provided copies of their presentation materials at or subsequent to the hearing. The speakers were:

- Eric Goplerud—Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax (Government Center)
- Jessica Bowser (South County)
- Jim Lemon—Biogas Researchers, Inc. (Government Center)
- Trish Strat (Government Center)
- John Cartmill--Fairfax Climate Watch (Government Center)
- Jehanne Arslan (Government Center)
- Merrily Pierce—McLean Citizens Association (Government Center)
- Flint Webb (Government Center)

Mr. Kaplan passed along a message from Alan Ford, who received an Environmental Excellence Award last year in the County Resident category and who provided testimony at the last two public hearings. Mr. Kaplan noted that Mr. Ford had an unavoidable conflict could not attend, and that Mr. Ford was hoping to be able to thank EQAC in person for its recognition of him this past year.

In addition, the following people did not testify at the public hearing but provided written testimony:

- Laura Anderko
- Glenda Booth
- Kay Fowler
- Constance Hartke
- Ross Shearer
- Kathy Whitcraft

Unless otherwise noted, participants presented testimony as individuals rather than on behalf of groups.

Each of the first seven speakers read from prepared comments—all of these comments are included as attachments to this summary.

1. Eric Goplerud (Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax)

Mr. Goplerud referenced in his comments a resolution from the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, which is also included as an attachment with his written comments.

His comments focused on the need for county action on climate change solutions, expressing his view that the county is lagging in this area. He stressed a need for urgency, metrics and accountability and recommended that EQAC and the county commit to the following in 2014:

1. Increase the energy efficiency in county buildings by 25% over the next three years, and lead by publicly reporting the energy consumption of county buildings by the end of 2014. He supported a county proposal for a real-time energy dashboard and recommended that a web-accessible dashboard be provided for all county buildings, including public schools. He supported the use of smart meter-driven energy efficiency programs for county buildings and the encouragement of use of such meters for commercial and residential buildings.
2. Establish a centralized environment and climate office with authority for coordinating the actions of individual county agencies and for promoting business and citizen engagement to protect the environment, promote innovative solutions and save the taxpayers money. There should be clear, enforceable metrics to reduce public, commercial and residential greenhouse gas pollution.
3. Increase the energy efficiency of commercial buildings. In support of this recommendation, Mr. Goplerud suggested strengthened language for the Sustainable Development Policy for Capital Projects (the policy calls for certain projects to “strive for” a LEED Silver designation; this should be a requirement) and proffers encouraging energy tracking and benchmarking, citing the county’s transportation demand management proffer process as a model that could be applied.
4. Encourage public, private and community projects to demonstrate use of local alternative, renewable energy. He expressed support for the Lorton Green Energy Triangle and recommended reconstitution of the Chairman’s Private Sector Energy Task Force.

Dr. Zaragoza commended UUCF’s efforts and thanked Mr. Goplerud for his comments; he expressed interest in following up on his proposals. Mr. Weisman commended Mr. Goplerud for including schools within the broader recommendation for energy dashboards for county buildings.

Mr. Lamb asked if this was an effort of the Fairfax County-based congregation or if it was broader in scope. Mr. Goplerud replied that UUCF was working with organizations across the county, including a broad network of faith groups known as Interfaith Power and Light. He also referenced efforts of the Chesapeake Climate Action Network and the Great Falls Group of the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club.

2. Jessica Bowser

Ms. Bowser indicated that, while she was speaking as an individual resident of Kingstowne, she was speaking with the support of the staff of the Kingstowne Residential Homeowners Association.

Ms. Bowser's presentation focused on large snapping turtles that have been crossing Kingstowne Village Parkway, where the road passes over a creek. She noted that these crossings are occurring each spring, during the turtles' nesting season. She noted the hazards associated with: motorists swerving to avoid turtles; motorists stopping their cars on the road; motorists attempting to move the turtles out of the road (risking physical harm to both themselves and the turtles); and motorists running over the turtles.

Ms. Bowser indicated that it is not known if the turtles are crossing the road due to a blockage in a passage under the road or if there is another reason for this. She noted that there has been recent construction in this area and that it is therefore possible that the turtles cannot pass safely under the road.

She noted that she had contacted several offices and organizations and was not able to receive any assistance. She recommended that the area be examined for possible blockages and remedies that would allow wildlife to pass freely under the road. She also requested "turtle crossing" signs that would warn motorists of this hazard.

Mr. McLaren suggested that Ms. Bowser contact the Lee District Supervisor's office. Mr. Lamb expressed concern that Ms. Bowser had contacted so many people without getting assistance. He suggested that there is something missing in regard to responsibility for addressing wildlife conflicts with traffic. He requested that this be a policy issue for discussion by EQAC.

3. Jim Lemon (Biogas Researchers, Inc.)

Mr. Lemon's comments focused on the benefits of biogas production and consumption. He identified biogas as "a renewable, clean-burning, waste-based fuel, and its production and consumption actually mitigate a host of solid waste, sewerage, surface water, air emission and soil nutrient problems. Purified biogas is 98% pure methane, identical to the natural gas that heats our homes."

Mr. Lemon explained that Biogas Researchers, Inc. is a recently incorporated 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that has been created to “raise awareness of the benefits afforded by increased production and consumption of biogas in the National Capital region.”

In his presentation, Mr. Lemon highlighted the following:

- Existing biogas collection and use at the I-95 Landfill and Noman M. Cole, Jr. Pollution Control Plant.
- The potential for fueling motor vehicles with renewable natural gas.
- The potential for “directed biogas,” which is renewable natural gas produced through a waste treatment process that is subsequently injected into a natural gas pipeline that can then be used as “green” energy.
- Efforts at the Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant to produce enough biogas to generate up to 14 megawatts of electric power.

Mr. Lemon recommended that EQAC and Fairfax County explore opportunities to use a good portion of the solid waste (including food waste), fats/oils/grease (FOG) and sewage sludge to produce biogas. He offered his organization’s support and encouraged the county to “lead a joint effort with neighboring jurisdictions to help make Northern Virginia and the National Capital a robust, leading producer and consumer of biogas.” He cited the county’s reevaluation of its relationship with Covanta as an opportunity to take another look at how we deal with solid waste and FOG.

Dr. Zaragoza stated that this is an area of interest to him, particularly in regard to opportunities to turn the food waste stream into a useful product. He expressed hope for follow-up discussions.

4. Trish Strat

Ms. Strat’s comments focused on a proposal by the Girl Scout Council of the Nation’s Capital to construct a warehouse on its Camp Crowell property in the Oakton area. She referenced a recent decision by the Board of Zoning Appeals establishing that the proposed warehouse could not be established on this property, noting that GSCNC was appealing this decision to the Circuit Court. She expressed her view that the pursuit of the proposed warehouse (through a special exception amendment application) was in conflict with the Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan and asked EQAC to advise the Board of Supervisors that no Public Benefit Association should be allowed to disregard the county’s Zoning Ordinance or Comprehensive Plan. She also asked EQAC to advise the Board of Supervisors that the construction of the proposed warehouse would not be in the best interest of the county.

Ms. Strat also suggested that the county should pursue acquisition of a portion of the Environmental Quality Corridor on the property for inclusion in the Park Authority’s stream valley park system, contingent on the use by GSCNC of the revenue from this

acquisition for the purchase of appropriately-zoned land to build its warehouse. She asked that EQAC encourage the Board of Supervisors to inquire about such a purchase.

5. John Cartmill (Fairfax Climate Watch)

Mr. Cartmill's comments focused on his message that "we need to reduce carbon emissions drastically starting now." He highlighted direct effects of climate change in Fairfax County, such as extreme weather events, and noted implications of a carbon tax and of climate refugees who may migrate from areas impacted by sea level rise. He characterized climate change as a moral issue, noting that the carbon dioxide released during decades of dramatic growth continues to warm the planet and that continued emissions are cumulative. He cited impacts that have already occurred as well as emissions reductions that are needed; he stressed a need for greenhouse gas emissions reductions now and made note of the county's Cool Counties pledge.

Mr. Cartmill expressed concern that the county is not on a path to meet its Cool Counties goals, highlighting road construction needs and lighting of as-yet unopened Metrorail stations along the Silver Line. He questioned the expense of the Silver Line extension and indicated that this money could have been better spent on renewable energy and state-of-the-art buses. He stated that "we will be forced to make hard choices and cutting emissions must be considered in every decision the county makes."

Mr. Cartmill supported urbanization efforts in Merrifield and Tysons Corner but stressed that much more is needed; he called for a Marshall Plan mentality and stressed a need for the county to apply successes from other communities—he cited several examples (see his written comments).

He concluded his remarks by stressing the need for public engagement.

6. Jehanne Arslan

Ms. Arslan focused her comments on the proposal for a warehouse on the Camp Crowell property that was highlighted earlier by Ms. Strat. She highlighted the following:

- The lack of Comprehensive Plan support for an industrial use in the RE [Residential Estate] zoning district.
- The ability of an organization identified as a "public benefit association" to pursue uses that would not be approved if submitted by another entity, and her view that "no entity or individual should be given greater standing than another."
- The ability of public benefit associations to pursue approvals through special exceptions, and the ability of subsequent property owners to continue these uses.
- Her recommendation to remove the "public benefit association" designation from the Zoning Ordinance.

- Her understanding that the county is “unable to proactively monitor special exceptions and any related development conditions imposed by the BOS [Board of Supervisors]” and the reliance of the county on the public to report suspected violations.
- Her recommendation that more uses require special permits as opposed to special exceptions, given that special exceptions run with the property (and can transfer to future property owners) while special permits apply specifically to the applicant.
- Her recommendation that development plans associated with special permits, special exceptions and other development proposals be posted on-line at the time an application is accepted for review.

7. Merrily Pierce—McLean Citizens Association

Ms. Pierce thanked EQAC for its efforts and recognized, in particular, the efforts of Frank Crandall, the Dranesville District representative on EQAC. She addressed the following issues in her comments:

- Stormwater Management—Support for the county’s program and a Stormwater Service District rate increase.
- Environmental Improvement Program—Support for inclusion in the FY 2015 budget.
- Watershed protection—support for continued efforts.
- Non-motorized/multi-modal transportation—support for related efforts.
- Land use and transportation—support for EQAC recommendations in this area.
- Energy—Support for the county’s LEED program and energy conservation measures.
- Water quality—continued support for healthy streams and water quality protection.
- Road chemicals—support for substitutes for sodium chloride-based chemicals for deicing roads.
- Infill development and stormwater management—Request for the county to consider a way to measure the estimated cumulative stormwater impact of infill development (existing and projected impervious surface) in affected areas in light of existing and projected impervious cover.
- Natural Resources Management Plan/alignment with Fairfax County Park Authority resources—Support for increased stewardship of parkland and advocacy for more staff support; concern about loss of trees and other vegetation in stream valleys in McLean due to invasive species and other reasons; support for efforts to reverse degradation in parks.
- Support for programs that control the deer population—sterilization does not solve related problems (threats to the understory; threats to neighborhood shrubbery; hosting of deer ticks).

- Trees—Support for protection and enhancement of tree cover.
- Environmental Stewardship—Support for a number of environmental stewardship efforts.
- Community health—Recognition of links between environment and park programs and healthy living; support for EQAC to incorporate the “Live Healthy Fairfax” initiative into its efforts.

After the public hearing, Ms. Pierce provided both her written comments and guidance on two additional noise-related issues that she did not address in her testimony (external fuel-fed power generators and construction noise in residential neighborhoods). Both documents are included as attachments to this summary.

8. Flint Webb

Mr. Webb identified himself as the Chair of the Environmental Committee of the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations but stressed that his comments were not comments from the Federation.

He noted that three environmental resolutions were anticipated for consideration by the Federation this year:

- Sustainable energy (the county is doing a lot but could do more).
- Deer population control (option to do surgical sterilization as a pilot project).
- Controlling trash (the State should provide the county with the authority to levy a bag tax).

He expressed his view that the county can better enforce its litter laws.

Dr. Zaragoza noted EQAC support for a disposable bag fee and concurred that there is a need for state legislation on this issue. He stated that he would welcome more interaction from the Federation in light of the common interests shared by these two groups.

Closing

Chairman Koch thanked everyone for coming out and participating and for the clear, concrete and thoughtful testimony that was presented.

Written Testimony

As noted earlier, the following people did not testify at the public hearing but provided written comments:

- Laura Anderko
- Glenda Booth
- Kay Fowler
- Constance Hartke
- Ross Shearer
- Kathy Whitcraft

All written comments are included as attachments to this summary.

Laura Anderko--Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments

Dr. Anderko's comments encouraged the county to develop an adaptation plan to prepare citizens for public health impacts associated with climate change, including heat waves, poor air quality and severe storms. She identified several possible strategies to reduce health-related risks of climate change and stressed a need for a climate-health adaptation plan to establish linkages among municipalities, hospital systems and public health to address extreme weather events.

Dr. Anderko also called for the county to invest in a strong mitigation plan, to include protection and expansion of the tree canopy, increased use of renewable energy, energy conservation initiatives and support for nonmotorized transportation and public transportation in the built environment.

Glenda Booth (Audubon Society of Northern Virginia)

Ms. Booth noted that a conflict had prevented her from attending the public hearing. She thanked EQAC for including the Wetlands Board in its report.

Ms. Booth identified climate change as the top priority of ASNV and urged the county to implement applicable recommendations issued by the Virginia Climate Commission. She reiterated her recommendations from the January 7, 2013 public hearing (see <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/eqac/publichearings/>).

Ms. Booth also stressed a need for implementation of the natural landscaping plan developed under the leadership of former Chairman Gerry Connolly and expressed appreciation for the county's support for restoration of Dyke Marsh.

Ms. Booth included a copy of a statement from ASNV to the Fairfax County Park Authority in regard to the Park Authority's Natural Resource Management Plan. Included within that letter were support for the following:

- Restoration of degraded areas.
- Greenhouse gas emissions reductions (e.g., reducing the need for mowing by reducing grassy areas).
- Climate change adaptation.
- Solicitation of public comments and suggestions in regard to funding/staff resources.
- Training of all staff in proper stewardship.
- Provision of comprehensive natural resource inventories in all park master plans.
- Adequate plan review staff in the Resource Management Division.
- Board of Supervisors policies to require mitigation for impacts to natural areas.
- Use of native species in planting efforts, in support of restoration of biodiversity.
- Clearly defined goals, measurable feedback mechanisms, holistic management and science-based decision-making.
- An emphasis on forested areas, but also an emphasis on other habitats such as meadows.
- An emphasis on restoration of health of the county's waterways.
- Connectivity of open space areas to support conservation corridors.
- Stewardship efforts.
- Partnerships with other county agencies to prioritize natural resource protection and restoration in county decision-making.
- Avoiding placement of cell phone towers and other commercial facilities in county parks.

Kay Fowler

Ms. Fowler asked why she continues to see recently-planted non-native landscapes around county buildings.

Constance Hartke

Ms. Hartke expressed her opposition to the construction of a warehouse at Camp Crowell (see earlier comments from Ms. Strat and Ms. Arslan). She noted that a pair of Bald Eagles had nested near there last year and had returned this year.

Ross Shearer

Mr. Shearer identified the following recommendations in support of the county's pledge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions under the Cool Counties Declaration:

- Establish a budget category sourced from local tax revenue to fund annually the county's response to climate change (i.e., annual emissions inventories, policy implementation and community education and outreach).
- Promote the adoption of branded energy efficiency programs for buildings (e.g., use of ASHRAE and ENERGY STAR programs) along with publishing of heating and cooling energy requirements of buildings.
- Develop internal staff capacity on a continuous basis (e.g., the county should be asked to report to EQAC on county policy encouraging county staff to make suggestions, take actions and be recognized for their accomplishments; use staff expertise when available as opposed to contractors—a recent contractor effort to develop “Energy Saving Tips” produced poor results and would have been improved with better internal vetting).
- Revise the online Energy Saving Tips to make it more instructive on how to make a house more efficient and comfortable—Mr. Shearer offered several specific criticisms of the information that has been posted on-line as well as specific suggestions for improvement. His comments support revisions to this information using qualified county staff as well as additional community events providing homeowners with hands-on help.

Kathy Whitcraft

Ms. Whitcraft's comments addressed the proposal from the Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital to construct a warehouse at its Camp Crowell property (see earlier comments from Ms. Strat, Ms. Arslan and Ms. Hartke) and reiterated concerns expressed by others about this proposal and its relationship to the Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan. She offered a similar recommendation to that presented by Ms. Strat: the county should purchase a portion of the floodplain on this property and incorporate this sensitive area into the Fairfax County Park Authority's stream valley park system, with a stipulation that GSCNC earmark the revenue from this purchase to the purchase of an off-site location for its warehousing needs. She cited guidance from the Comprehensive Plan to support the county's acquisition of floodplain areas and cited guidance from the Difficult Run Watershed Management Plan regarding impacts to streams of impervious surfaces.